

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Currently Amended) [[A]] An isolated DNA, which encodes the following protein (A) or (B):
 - (A) a protein comprising the amino acid sequence shown in according to SEQ ID NO: 2; or
 - (B) a protein comprising an amino acid sequence derived from the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2 by substitution, deletion of 1 to 10 amino acids, insertion, addition of 1 to 10 amino acids, or inversion substitution of 1 or several to 10 amino acids and having a growth-promoting function.
3. (Currently Amended) [[A]] An isolated DNA of the following (A), (B), or (C):
 - (A) a DNA comprising the nucleotide sequence of nucleotide Nos. 180 to 1376 in the nucleotide sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1;
 - (B) DNA being capable of hybridizing under stringent conditions to a DNA consisting of a sequence complementary to the nucleotide sequence of nucleotide Nos. 180 to 1376 in the nucleotide sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1, and encoding a protein having a growth-promoting function; or

(C) DNA being capable of hybridizing under stringent conditions to a DNA consisting of a nucleotide sequence that is produced from a part of the nucleotide sequence of nucleotide Nos. 180 to 1376 in the nucleotide sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1, having a function as a primer or a probe, and encoding a protein having a growth-promoting function.

4. (Original) A recombinant vector, which comprises the DNA according to claim 2 or 3.
5. (Original) A transformant, which is transformed with the recombinant vector according to claim 4.
6. (Currently Amended) A microorganism having an enhanced growth-promoting function, wherein the number of copies of the DNA according to claim 2 or 3 is amplified within a cell the microorganism.
7. (Original) The microorganism according to claim 6, which is an acetic acid bacterium belonging to the genus *Acetobacter* or the genus *Gluconacetobacter*.
8. (Withdrawn) A method for producing vinegar, which comprises culturing the microorganism according to claim 6 or 7 in a medium containing alcohol and causing the microorganism to generate and accumulate acetic acid in the medium.

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9. (Cancelled)